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## THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

### PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

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#### PROFESSOR DEWEY'S "JUDGMENTS OF PRACTISE"

JUDGMENTS of practise are judgments which concern things to be done. They are such as: "It is better to do this," "Smith should consult a physician." In Professor Dewey's *Essays in Experimental Logic*, the consideration of these judgments is given a prominent place. The author hints that what one does with these judgments may easily lead to suggestions concerning a proper general theory of the status and task of knowledge. I agree that certain questions of considerable importance are raised, and I therefore desire to examine such judgments further. My quotations are drawn from Professor Dewey's chapter, but I should certainly not wish to commit Professor Dewey to such interpretations as I may make.

So let us consider Professor Dewey's characterization of such judgments. These judgments, we are told, imply "an incomplete situation," going out beyond the moment, and reaching towards a future that is not yet. Let us here pause to observe that the word "situation" has a number of possible meanings. It may mean "where I am." It may mean something quite distinct, namely, "where I think I am." "Where I am," may include all my surroundings; or only all such as *might* have influence on me; or all such as *will* have influence on me. It might also be limited to such surroundings as have effects on me that call out, on my part, characteristic reactions, relevant and purposive. "Where I think I am," is not to be identified with this last, for I may believe that I am reacting to things there that are not actually there, or may act with reference to possibilities that remain possibilities. On the other hand, I may react as an organism in characteristic ways to stimuli of which I can hardly be said to be mentally aware. The savage grows feverish, as his body fights against microbes, and he meanwhile anxiously propitiates the demons that his imagination has conjured up. Professor Dewey does not generally make these distinctions. He is, nevertheless, surprised when people interpret him

in subjectivist terms. Yet one who fails to distinguish between what is and what he experiences, has no reason to be surprised at such interpretation.

A further differentia of the judgment of practise is the presence of the maker of the judgment in the situation judged about. Indeed, not only is the judger involved, but Professor Dewey adds further: "Their subject-matter implies that the proposition is itself a factor in the completion of the situation," which, as we learned above, is "incomplete." An epiphenomenalist might wish to argue a prior question here. I shall not. I am willing to go with Professor Dewey. Only I should like to discover first exactly where he is going. For instance, the reference to "subject-matter" is ambiguous. "Subject-matter" may mean all of what is specifically referred to in the judgment, whether existent or not; or again, such parts as do, or will, exist; or on the contrary, it may refer to the meanings or actual present contents, whatever they are, in terms of which I think of this objective judged about; or lastly, it may even mean the total situation, in some of the senses above mentioned. In any case, the judging might be endowed with causal efficacy, without ascribing any such efficacy to what is judged about, since a judging might have an effect, even when erroneous, though in the case of such false judgment what is judged to be existent is not existent at all, and so can hardly be itself causal.

Next it turns out that practical judgments are to be limited to what are, in some rather general sense, value judgments. "One outcome is better than another." And further, the "subject-matter" implies "that the proposition is to be a factor in securing (as far as may be) the better." I suppose all that is meant here is that we have some sort of ulterior motive in making the judgment. But this leads to a further point which, though not obviously fundamental to the logical exposition, is dwelt upon at such great length as to show that here is situated one of Professor Dewey's own main interests. We are told that practical judgments bind together present means and future ends. I do not merely judge something good in the abstract. I judge it a good future for me, who am what I am. Of various ends abstractly possible, only those to the attainment of which adequate means are available and those only in connection with the relevant means—those and those alone are worthy of our consideration. On the one hand complete predetermination is denied, on the other, impractical utopias. This practicality of attitude is worthy of respect, and perhaps we need not here do more than warn of its obvious dangers, though it would be easy to sing the praises of ideals that have roused men to great deeds and shaped the course of his-

tory, though lying far beyond what is ever destined to be on this earth; it would be easy to maintain that no ideal has ever been a great dynamic inspiration which was actually realizable in point of fact. "These aims are means," says Professor Dewey. Yes, but the judging them good has been a means of human advancement because they themselves were possibilities whose realization as ends was judged good.

But leaving these considerations, we now come to the crux of the whole exposition. We are told, concerning these judgments of practise, "their truth or falsity is constituted by the issue." "The event or issue of [the course of action indicated] is the truth or falsity of the judgment. This is an immediate conclusion from the fact that only the issue gives the complete subject-matter. In this case, at least, verification and truth completely coincide." Let us examine.

It will be necessary to begin with some general considerations about verification. Suppose I ventured to affirm, "It is going to rain." Suppose, thereafter, I went into the house, and did not look out again. Suppose later it did begin to rain. There would then be one sense in which it could be said that the rain had "verified" my judgment. It simply happened as I predicted. The truth and this verification could perhaps be said to be the same—if one were willing, in Aristotelian fashion, to say there are no specific truths about the future until the future event, by actually happening, ceases to be future. But this would apply to all judgments about the future. I feel sure Professor Dewey has something different in mind. He is thinking rather of the case where I do later look out of the window, and do see that it is raining. This is verification. But are we, then, to understand that this sort of verification is to be simply identified with the truth of my judgment? Note again that we are not yet considering judgments of practise, but are including all judgments about the future. But what I now advance concerning all verification will apply to the special cases as well. My contention is that it is most undesirable to cancel the distinction of truth and verification. I think it undesirable because I believe many or most judgments about the future are made to be used. This sounds pragmatic enough. Nevertheless I seem to be at sharp variance here with the literal interpretation of Professor Dewey's words. For what I mean by use is this. I do not judge, "It is going to rain," in order to verify whether it is going to rain. I make the judgment in order to avoid that striking verification which consists in getting caught out in it, and getting wet. I judge the matter in order to make up my mind about a further volitional decision, for instance whether I

shall, or shall not, go out for a walk. I desire that my judgment about the rain be true. I may not in the least desire that I should personally verify its truth. Surely it would be most inconvenient, therefore, to identify truth and verification. Neither, for that matter, should I wish to identify its truth and its use. Its truth is not even a cause or condition of its use. I use it because I think it is true. But my thinking it true does not make it true. We must distinguish (a) truth-claim, and (b) truth, and (c) use, and (d) verification. I see no gain in muddling these together.

But suppose I do verify. Does the verification consist in my act of looking out of the window, or in the rain which I see, or in both? It consists in the mere existence of none of these. You could look out of the same window and see all that I see when I look. But that would be no verification of my judgment. I not only have to look and see the rain. I have to *compare* what I see with the judgment that I made. I have to *recognize* that this is the rain that does correspond to, and fulfill, my judgment. That is, verification is comparison and recognition. It is an intellectual thing. It is not a mere plunging back into an unintellectualized immediate experience. It is not a mere activity of doing something. We need only to consider the case in which the judgment is refuted to perceive that even the above enumeration of factors is over-simplified. I judge, "There is a brick house at the end of the street." The refutation of this would not consist in failure to find the end of the street. Complete failure to verify is not refutation. Neither does it consist in finding a tree growing near the curb. In all good verification I find things I did not expect. Refutation obviously consists in finding the end of the street as expected, but not finding the house there, though expected. Part of my expectations, and part only, are met. Analysis of significant factors is involved. But furthermore, the not finding a house there is not a mere observation. It is itself also an intellectual inference from what I do see. I can observe what is there, but I can not observe what is not. The latter factor belongs to thought. In brief summing up, verification involves analysis and comparison and recognition, and is not a mere plunging back into a non-intellectual immediacy or activity.

But, to return to Professor Dewey's "practical judgments," I think it can easily be shown that the situation with them involves all the above considerations and some others in addition. To avoid raising the question of objective value, let us select a case of judgment of preference. A preference need not be a judgment. Thus I may look at blue and red, and prefer the blue. This is hardly to be called a judgment, because there is no question of true or false.

We should get a judgment of preference only in cases where, at the moment, the alternatives were not thus present. Let us take, as an example, a practical judgment of preference referring to my own future. I judge, let us say, that "It would be more enjoyable to go to the concert this evening, rather than to the theater." In what sense can this bring about its own verification, and in what sense is the verification one and the same with its truth? Let it not be said we are unfairly complicating the case by introducing alternatives. Only when alternatives exist, even if unexpressed, would there be any meaning in supposing the judgment influenced the result. I think, therefore, that the example of an explicit preferential judgment is really the sort of thing that Professor Dewey is seeking to describe, and indeed, his own examples seem all to involve alternatives of action, even if only the alternative between doing and refraining.

So I have judged that it would be more enjoyable to attend the concert. Does this judgment bring about its own verification, even if acted upon? I can not go to both places. I judge in favor of the concert, and go. But can any enjoyment I get there suffice of itself to assure me that the theater would not have been even more pleasing? Certainly I can compare with previous trips to the theater. But that is an intellectual comparison of widely separated experiences, and not the experiences themselves. It is another judgment. Certainly I can infer from what my friend says, who did go to the theater that same night. But that involves other judgments, and not immediate experience. Could I do both alternative deeds, I should not need to make this judgment of practise which is supposed to lead to its own verification in deeds and experiences. If I go to the concert, that night's enjoyment of the theater never does come into existence. Professor Dewey says the subject-matter of these judgments of practise is as yet incomplete. I shall go a step further, and say that one essential part of the subject-matter is such as is destined to be forever only a possibility. The judgment is made precisely because the verification which Professor Dewey seems to call for is impossible. It is made because we have to choose and reject, and what we reject we forever put beyond the range of actual verifying experience. Certainly we can test these judgments of practise; and we do it by adding further experiential data. But these data themselves need to be interpreted. They become raw material to be worked up in new intellectual operations, new judgments of comparison. But in no sense are the new data themselves to be directly identified with an adequate verification. The completion of the incomplete situation is, therefore, neither the truth of the practical judgment nor its verification.

Let us reinforce the above argument from a slightly different angle. Judgments of practise are judgments about a future whose character is causally dependent upon the making of just these judgments. But though, by this hypothesis, you make the future what it becomes, and do so because that sort of thing is declared to be good or preferable, it is not at all evident that it becomes good or preferable because you bring it into being. Yet this seems to be the force of Professor Dewey's argument. If a cook thinks she can make a cake that is peculiarly delicious by combining the ingredients in certain novel proportions, and if she tries it and the taste is as expected, then that judgment of hers is causal towards the making of the cake, and obviously this particular cake can not have a pleasing taste until it is made. But what is asserted in the judgment is the connection, "If a cake be made in these proportions, then this taste will result." What is made by the cook is the cake, and not this hypothetical connection or implication of qualities. Only if the making a judgment that cakes concocted in certain proportions taste good were the cause which actually produced this relation between the proportions and the taste—only then could it be said that the judgment produced its own truth. It is not enough that the judgment causes the cook to make a cake. The judgment must cause cakes made in this proportion to taste good, when otherwise they would not. Aside from pathological cases of self-hypnotism, I see no reason to suppose that this ever happens, and therefore I see no reason to suppose that Professor Dewey's theory is ever true.

To "pick an argument to pieces bone by bone" is an ungrateful task. Yet this argument I have been analyzing is one which Professor Dewey and many of his followers believe, or so I understand, to be the ablest contribution to logical theory that he has ever written; and he suggests that it is the entering wedge which, pushed home in all its consequences, will bring the edifice of those philosophers who disagree with him crashing to the ground. Therefore I have thought it worth while to show exactly, and in detail, just where those who disagree with Professor Dewey take specific issue with him. As I read the pages about judgments of value which follow as a corollary to his argument, I find, as I should like to point out more fully did space permit, intentions worthy of much praise: a vision of an open future, wherein new combinations are to be tried, and the experience of new values brought into being in this world of ours. But I fail utterly to see why one who would welcome such a vision, or one who would hold in esteem the experimental method, with its close grip on realities, is also compelled to believe in this extraordinary logical theory. I can judge that, under certain condi-

tions, sulphuric acid and copper will make copper sulphate, and I can experiment and test it, and doubtless it is necessary for me to do so before I can lay claim to real knowledge. But if some one thence concluded that, "You have made sulphuric acid and copper make copper sulphate"—as though otherwise they would have made something else—"and therefore your judgment has made itself true"—such a statement of the case would seem to me the purest of verbal fallacies, a play on different senses of the word "make." Yet this is exactly the result to which the ingenious dialectic of Professor Dewey seems to lead.

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### THE PLACE OF METAPHYSICS

IT is regrettable that Professor Warbeke in his comments<sup>1</sup> on my article on "Methodological Teleology"<sup>2</sup> declines to enter upon the important questions I had endeavored to raise, such as the relation of methods to metaphysics, of values to facts, of axioms to postulates, and merely tries to exculpate himself from certain animadversions he finds in my paper.<sup>3</sup> He does indeed state that metaphysics are

<sup>1</sup> This JOURNAL, Vol. XVII., p. 120.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XVI., p. 505.

<sup>3</sup> I had mentioned, incidentally, in a footnote (p. 550), that his accounts of me were inaccurate and not to be trusted, and instanced that he had misrepresented me (1) as demanding the "abrogation" of the law of contradiction, and (2) as identifying "true" and "useful." He replies to (1), but not to (2), by quoting (at unnecessary length) from the context of the passage he referred to, but not, unfortunately, the two sentences immediately preceding the one he had attacked. As however he does (this time) quote it directly, he reveals that I had *never* said that the law of contradiction "demands its own abrogation," but had merely remarked that it *seemed* to, and moreover that in the next sentence I had described this view as a "paradox." That ought, I suppose, to satisfy me. On the other hand it seems odd to say that his selections from me were "discussed under the head: 'Contradiction—as a Principle of Being, Either Meaningless or False; as a Principle of Thought, Self-contradictory.'" For these headings are *not* from the text (as any one would suppose), but from the *index* (which is not by me), and they refer also to a later discussion (p. 131-2), in which the proper meaning of contradiction is worked out and the "paradox" is cleared up. It is difficult to believe that if Professor Warbeke had looked up this second passage, he would not have perceived that the view he was attacking was not mine, even if he had read the first too cursorily to notice the words "seem" and "paradox." I am sorry to say also that his quotations from my article in this JOURNAL leave much to be desired. Thus he quotes a passage (XVI., p. 551) in which I argued that the alleged "teleological constitution" of the world was *only a methodological assumption*